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Implementation of Inclusive Education For Special Needs Learners with Learning Disabilities

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Abstract

Conducting interviews is a very important qualitative research technique that helps researchers obtains answers from respondents by exploring their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. In this study, the researchers would like to explore the implementation of inclusive education in Special Education Program Integration with Learning Disabilities in primary school. Specifically, this study aims to identify the form of implementation of the program, the form of collaboration and adaptation performed by the subject teacher and resource teacher. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher designed structured interview questions for the principal, senior assistant special education teachers, subject teachers and resource teacher. Interview questions were then pilot tested in a primary school in the state of Malacca. Two administrators and two teachers who were involved in the Inclusive Education Program have been selected to be interviewed in this pilot test. Structured interview data were analyzed. Based on the interview, 68 units of themes have been established. These analyzed data were given to three experts to evaluate. Cohen's Kappa index for the validity and reliability of the interview questions were used and Cohen's Kappa coefficient of agreement at 0.7 was obtained. Thus, the set of interview questions is found to be suitable for this study. In addition to this structured interview, the study will also be supported through other findings such as observations and document analysis.

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1. Introduction

Inclusive Education Program in Malaysia began in 1962, 1988 and 1999. These differences in years are based on the type of target students with special needs. In 1962, the Inclusive Education Program was implemented for visually impaired students (Tambi, 1997). In 1988, the program was implemented in Special Education Integration Program with Learning Disabilities (Bosi, 2004). This program is the largest contributor to increase enrollment in Inclusive Education Program now. In 1999, Inclusive Education Programs was implemented in technical schools (Shaari, 2005). In Malaysia, the Inclusive Education Program is an education program for students with special needs who are educated in a regular class at government schools or non-government schools for nearly all of the day, or at least for more than half of the day (Malaysia, 2013).

Studies related to the Inclusive Education Program in Malaysia are not new. Several researchers in previous studies have conducted it with a different focus. Some of the studies include, “The Perceptions of Inclusive Practices in Malaysia” (Jelas, 2000); “Malaysian Preschool Children with ADHD in Inclusive Setting” (Saad, 2003); “Pilot Study Implementation of Inclusive Education in Malaysia (Bosi, 2004); “Pilot Study on the Commitment and The Role of Teachers in The Implementation of the Approach to Inclusive Education in Malaysia (Saad, 2005); “The Management of Inclusive Education Program in Technical and Secondary Day School” (Shaari, 2005); and “A case Study on Inclusive Education Program Implementation for Autistic Pupils at a Primary School” (Muhammad & Mahmud., 2010).

In 2013, a guideline was issued by the Ministry of Education. This guideline briefly describes the procedure for placing pupils in inclusive classes, the age of pupils involved, the typical ratio of pupils and students with learning disabilities in the inclusive classroom, and the responsibilities of relevant parties (in school) in the implementation of Inclusive Education Program. This study will use this guideline to explore the implementation of Inclusive Education Program in Malaysia. This study will only focus on Special Education Integration Program with Learning Disabilities in primary schools. Since most of the research on Inclusive Education program uses quantitative research and/ or mixed methods research, the researchers felt the need to conduct a full qualitative research. This is because in qualitative research, there are various forms of interview design that can be developed to obtain thick, rich data utilizing a qualitative investigational perspective (Creswell, 2007).

In this study, the researchers will design a set of interview questions to obtain information from the respondents. Through the interviews, the researchers will have in-depth information relating to the experiences and views respondents by exploring their perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education in Special Education Program Integration with Learning Disabilities in the primary school. The interview was conducted as a pilot study to test the validity of a set of questions developed by the researchers. The pilot study was conducted at School A, Merlimau, Malacca.

The interviews became a key instrument in the study of the implementation of Inclusive Education in Special Education Integration Program with Learning Disabilities. Thus, the set of questions must be valid and reliable in order to answer the research objectives effectively. Other than testing the validity of the questions by verifying them through the agreements of experts, themes from the findings in interviews were also established.

2. Purpose and objectives

The purpose and the objectives of the study is as follows.

2.1 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to design a set of interview questions for qualitative research. The set of questionnaires will be validated in a pilot study. This validated interview questions will be used in the study to explore the implementation of Inclusive Education Program in Malaysia. Among the questions posed in this study are:

- i) How do teachers implement the Inclusive Education Program?
- ii) What forms of collaboration can occur in the implementation of the Inclusive Education Program?

- iii) What are the adaptations made by subjects' teacher and resource teacher to the implementation of Inclusive Education Program?

2.2 Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to:

- i) Test the validity of the set of interview questions set by the researcher
- ii) Establish the themes of study from the findings of the interviews
- iii) Obtain the agreement of experts in order to validate the set of interview questions

3. Research design

Qualitative research design can be complicated depending on the level of experience the researcher may have and with particular type of methodology. As researchers, efforts to develop and expand knowledge and experience in the form of qualitative research is very necessary in order to better utilize a variety of research paradigms for further investigations (Tuner, 2010).

In qualitative research design, an interview protocol is one area of interest to researchers. Interviews help researchers collect in-depth information on respondents' views and experiences on a particular idea, program, or situation. In fact, in order to strengthen the findings from interviews, researchers usually makes additional data collection such as through observation and document analysis.

Pilot tests should also be carried out to help researchers determine whether there is a weakness, limitation, or other flaws in the set of interview questions. Through the pilot test, the researchers can check and improve the set of questions before performing the actual study (Kvale, 2007). The pilot test will also help researchers refine research questions.

The place of study chosen should be simple and not complex (Yussof, 2001). This allows researchers to make more frequent visits, observations and interviews at the school and save time. Respondents should be carefully selected for an interview (Creswell, 2007). Researchers should also conduct a pilot study on respondents who are prepared in an open and honest sharing of information or "their story" (p. 133). This is because the interview is easier done in a comfortable environment in which respondents can share the information.

3.1 Research Instruments

Research instrument is a device used to measure the variables studied (Konting, 2009). With this instrument, the study is more systematic, organized, focused and have high reliability (Merriam, 2001). In this study, the main instrument is the researchers. This is because the study was carried out based on the thinking of researchers (Yussof, 2001). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), researchers should get a better understanding of making data interpretation because of the dynamic interaction between researchers and informants.

3.1.1 Interview

In this study, the researchers choose the structured interview technique because it is suitable for this research. In addition, the structured interview gives more space for the respondents to express their opinion on the scope required. Structured interviews are given consistently to several respondents. Thus, the answer given by the respondents is consistent in the scope of the question. The questions' construction is relatively easy to build. The researchers use protocol questions as proposed by Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess and Ladany (2005), Protocol questions are a list of questions prepared by the researchers to find answers to the research questions. Protocol questions are arranged according to:

- a) Introduction questions
- b) Transition questions
- c) The key question

d) Closing questions

However, the researchers will also provide additional follow-up questions for the respondents when more information is needed (probing questions). According to Berg (1995), additional questions will provide additional reliability to respond to repeated topics and responses that have been given. This interview was also conducted with flexibility to respondents and is not subject to the order of questions in the interview protocol (Merriam, 2001). The questions used were "open-ended" questions. This is because the research questions should be effective and have the five elements: the words should be open; the question must be as neutral as possible; the question must be asked one by one; the question must be clear; and be cautious when asking the "why" questions (McNamara, 2009).

In this pilot study, interviews were carried out to the principal, senior assistant special education teacher, subject teachers and resource teacher. All interviews were then analysed using NVivo8 software.

3.2 Data Collection

School A, Merlimau Malacca has been selected as the pilot school to test the validity of the interview questions. Interviews were carried out with the principal, senior assistant special education teacher, subject teacher and resource teacher. Each interview takes approximately 45 minutes to 2 hours. All interviews are recorded using a tape recorder and video recording.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data collected (Merriam, 2009). If the data is not analysed, the data collected will not bring any meaning. Researchers also need to analyse the data each time the data is collected (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This shows that the process of data analysis is an on-going process.

In this study after the data is collected, the data is analysed. Data in the form of speech and actions of respondents are collected were then transcribed into word (verbatim). Researchers will conduct data screening (select, focus, simplify, abstract, changing the meaning of the data easy to handle and count) (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

In this study, researchers compared the data obtained from respondents, as proposed by Mohammed (2012). The researcher then obtains themes and categories using NVivo8 software. The six steps proposed by Malakolunthu (2001) are namely:

- a) Data cleaning
- b) The encoding of data
- c) Updating the data
- d) Analysis of documents
- e) Understand of documents; and
- f) Analytical categories

There are two types of validity: internal validity and external validity. In order to ensure internal validity, there are five strategies (McCall & Simmons, 1969) that can be used in qualitative research which is as follows:

- a) The method of triangulation;
- b) Inspection and peer review as well as supervisors to ensure the validity of the interview instrument;
- c) The review by the informants in this research by allowing them to read, view and verify the interpretation done;
- d) Involve respondents in all phases of the research study; and
- e) Explain the hypothesis, subjectivity and theoretical orientation of the researchers at the beginning of the study.

External validity is ensured through the use of a lot of information, various themes and the maximum variation data until the data reached saturation. To preserve the validity of the content of the study, the researcher obtains information from teachers and administrators to use a different set of questions to get feedback on.

In this study, researchers have obtained the consent of the Index Cohen Kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960). Based

on Cohen's Kappa analysis, the researcher has sought the cooperation of three qualitative experts who knows how to evaluate the calculation of Cohen's Kappa coefficient level or consent of the themes of the interviews. The theme is chosen based on the domain of the transcription of the interview.

There are several opinions about the Cohen's Kappa index analysis to determine the degree of agreement among experts in qualitative research. According to Steven (1958), an agreement among the experts is important to determine the reliability in illustrating the themes. In 1977, Landis and Kosh have suggested ways to calculate Cohen's Kappa agreement using the scale (Landis & Kosh, 1977). Table 1 shows the Cohen's Kappa scale of agreement.

Table 1. Cohen's Kappa scale of agreement

Cohen's Kappa agreement using the scale.	Scale of agreement
Below 0.00	Very poor
0.00 – 0.20	Poor
0.21 – 0.40	Moderate
0.41 – 0.60	Moderate good
0.61 – 0.80	Good
0.81 – 1.00	Very good

This analyzed questionnaire was given to three experts to evaluate. After that, researchers will sit together to calculate the value of Cohen's Kappa agreement. Every agreement of the unit is noted. The coefficient of agreement for each expert is separately recorded and then aggregated to obtain a coefficient of agreement for the entire process. Then, the researchers calculate Cohen's Kappa formula as follows:

$$K = \frac{fa - fc}{N - fc}$$

Which is:

K - the coefficient of agreement

fa - unit of agreement

fc - units likely set at 50 percent expected agreement

N - number of units (themes) that tested the agreement

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Cohen's Kappa analysis

Table 2 shows the scale of agreement from the 3 experts who were given to evaluate the analyzed interview questionnaire

Table 2. Scale of agreement

Scale of agreement	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3
fa-fc	64/68	62/68	51/68
	<u>64-34</u>	<u>62/68</u>	<u>51/68</u>
	68-34	68-34	68-34
	30/34	28/34	17/34
fa-fc/N-fc	0.88	0.82	0.5
Sum of coefficient of agreement			
Average	0.88+0.82+0.5/3		
Coefficient of agreement	0.7		

Overall, there are 68 units of themes established. The operational definition of each theme was given to the experts to evaluate. According to Cohen (1960), 40 units are sufficient to find the consent of each theme (unit). Through the pilot study, the Cohen's Kappa coefficient of agreement at the level of 0.7 was obtained as well. Not many comments and suggestions given in writing as experts had verbal discussions with researchers. Improvements were made based on oral and written opinion given by the three appointed experts.

4.2 The results of the interview

Findings from the interviews conducted reveals that respondents can understand the interview questions set. This is because, when the researcher described the purpose of the interview questions, the respondents agreed that a set of questions developed can achieve the objectives of the research. Prior to going to the selected school to conduct the interview, the researchers have contacted the school, special education teachers and senior assistant to explain to them about the study so that respondents can respond truthfully and share their ideas and viewpoints about inclusive education freely as suggested by Creswell (2007).

The findings were analyses using NVivo8 software and researchers acquired 68 units of themes. This shows that the set of interview questionnaire reaches the standard theme in which Cohen suggested that the minimal is 40 units (1960).

Through the evaluation and suggestions made by experts, the researchers will also propose to conduct interviews to the mainstream teachers who are not conducting the teaching and learning of Inclusive Education Program. In addition, questions related to the theme of the special pedagogical needs will also be provided. Subject teachers should also know the methods and approaches that should be used appropriately when teaching in an inclusive classroom.

5. Conclusion

This study is only a pilot study on the implementation of the Inclusive Education Program conducted in the Special Education Program Integration at a primary school in Malacca. This study is an initial step taken by the researchers to test the validity of the interview questions that will be used in an interview before the actual study. It is also not intended to prove any theory or model of the implementation of Inclusive Education. However, it opens up space for discussions and improvements to make the study more rigorous and systematic. Thus, the set of interview questions must be validated to ensure that the data obtained may help researchers answer the research questions more accurately. In addition to this structured interview, other forms of data collection will be used in order to provide the researcher with a well-rounded collection of information for analyses.

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